

JUN 29 1946

MAY-JUNE

1946

WINTER
SEASON

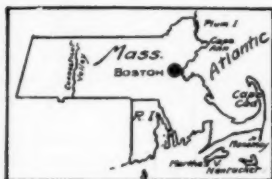
Audubon

MAGAZINE

SECTION II AUDUBON FIELD NOTES

Edited By Margaret Brooks Hickey

BOSTON REGION.—After a remarkably mild November, a raging northeast gale and blizzard brought winter violently and suddenly to eastern Massachusetts.



December was exceptionally cold (-136° for the month) with 3 different blizzards. Even the largest ponds on the outer Cape and the "balmy" islands of Martha's

Vineyard and Nantucket froze solidly. Many fall lingerers froze, or starved to death, while the latest migrants, such as the hardy seafowl proceeded farther south to winter.

The result was a very poor ornithological winter as regards the normal and commoner wintering species. Unfavorable conditions were most marked on Cape Cod and along the coastal points of southeastern Massachusetts. Here, with a normally milder winter climate, the variety of birdlife is much greater than near Boston. The "southern" element was practically absent this year, and the number of wintering ducks and other seafowl was greatly reduced. The Christmas count was the poorest in 15 years, barring one ill-advised effort during a raging gale. For some reason, woodpeckers, tree and song sparrows, and snow buntings were particularly scarce near Boston. The great exception was the blue jay, a "common" bird reputedly, but actually very variable in numbers; it was notably numerous during December and early January and then most of them disappeared.

January and February were approximately normal as regards temperature, but for 6 weeks it was steadily cold, the country was buried in snow, and it seemed like a long hard winter. February was particularly dull ornithologically. No new trends or developments took place, and every week the reports from observers could be summed up: "fewer species and fewer individuals."

The high lights of the winter were the appearance of certain irregular visitors, which had little or nothing to do with the meteorology.

Snowy owl.—One of the great flights of history took place, rivaling that of 1926-27. This flight, in Massachusetts at least, was notable for the number of inland birds and the lack of any great number of individuals in any one period. It began in late October and did not wane until late December. An unusual number of birds wintered, and many discovered that cities were safer than the coastal marshes. At least 3 birds spent the day on buildings in the heart of Cambridge, departing at dusk for the nearby dumps; they became most grimy, dirty, and disreputable looking, nothing "snowy" remaining but the facial disks.

Northern shrike.—It was also a notable flight year for this species, particularly near the coast, where it remained fairly common all winter. I saw 19 during the course of 12 trips. The goshawk and rough-legged hawk failed to show up in numbers, however.

Evening grosbeak.—The greatest known flight in history occurred. Birds were observed on the outer Cape in numbers for the first time, with 2 stragglers even reaching Nantucket on some impulse or urge hard to understand in a species knowing nothing of salt water. Numerous feeding stations reported steady flocks of 75-100 all winter. Banding has proved the error of such a natural assumption; at last reports one gentleman in Connecticut banded over 600 birds out of a "steady" flock of 75!

Pine grosbeak.—The moderate flight of this species was better inland than near the coast, where there was little food, and the birds never stayed any length of time in any one spot.

Several Acadian chickadees turned up near Boston. A hawk owl was shot at Chester, N.H., on November 9; another was briefly glimpsed in Essex County, Mass., flying across the road in front of a car. A third remained two weeks at West Peabody, so tame it could be closely approached; on the last day of its stay, the owner of the property offered

it a cold lamb chop by putting it down in plain sight; after retiring, the owl promptly seized the chop, flew away, and disappeared for good!

The 3 kinds of white-winged gulls showed up in fair numbers by late January, with more individuals of Kumlien's than usual, one party noting 6 in one day. A very striking bird, apparently a hybrid glaucous and great black-backed, was in Gloucester Harbor for over a week. An adult European black-headed gull spent the winter in Newburyport Harbor. At the same fruitful sewer pipes, Martin Karpus picked out an almost adult *Larus canus* subspecies; this bird, too, spent the winter, its plumage becoming completely adult in early March; it was studied at close range by over 100 people.

The most dramatic event of the winter was an adult ivory gull found by Russell Mason on January 27, while leading a two-bus field trip of the Massachusetts Audubon Society at Gloucester. Of all things, it was perched motionlessly on the ridge-pole of a summer cottage, with open bill, and was obviously ailing. Some young men climbed the house and just failed to catch it alive. It flew away, but returned a little later, and was seen to collapse and fall to the ground. It was picked up, and revived slightly with cod-liver oil, but died the next morning. At my suggestion, the body was sent by the Peabody Museum at Salem to the U.S. National Museum for a thorough post-mortem, and the bird turned out to be a veritable museum of internal parasites. Another curious detail, told me by Miss Frances Burnett who picked the bird up and brought it home, was that the legs and feet were encased in ice; the outdoor temperature at the time was about 20° F.—LUDLOW GRISCOM, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge 38, Mass.

NEW YORK REGION.—The weather during the past winter presented no marked variation from normal conditions. Temperatures somewhat above



the usual range in November were about compensated for by sub-normal readings in December. Precipitation was not heavy, either as rain or as snow; winds were moderate to high. None of the weather conditions seemed to have departed sufficiently from normal to warrant any correlation with the magnitude of the invasion of some unusual birds.

European cormorants wintered off Montauk Point; the earliest report was 6 on October 6 (Peck, Wells), and the latest 8 on February 3 (Bull).

Waterfowl.—Canada geese wintered in good numbers along both the Long Island and the New Jersey shores, while brant showed a very satisfying increase over the numbers observed in the few years past. Fresh-water ducks were frozen out of most of

the inland ponds by mid-December, but both at Hempstead Reservoir and at Brookville, L.I., they were well represented, the flocks including both European widgeon and European teal. Scaup and canvas-back were numerous along both the north and the south shores of Long Island. A flock of over 450 canvas-backs was reported at Little Neck Bay, L.I., February 10 (Kritzler). A raft of about 10,000 birds at Jamaica Bay on January 10 represented the maximum count of scaup (Komorowski). Redheads were down in numbers, as were American mergansers. Two harlequins were at Montauk in late February and early March (Ferguson, Aronoff, Stone), and scoters, mostly white-winged, wintered in considerable numbers at the same point. One report showed about 9500 in one flock as well as a small number of eiders, both king and American.

Raptors.—A black vulture on February 12 was satisfactorily reported from Montauk (Stone, Wells). Wintering buteos were rare; a few rough-legs were reported from Long Island but none from New Jersey. One gyrfalcon was seen at Jamaica Bay on December 22 (Komorowski). Duck hawks were rare.

Shorebirds.—The usual small number of red-backed sandpipers, black-bellied plover, and sanderlings wintered on both the Long Island and New Jersey shores. At Rye, N.Y., a ruddy turnstone was seen in a flock of 40 purple sandpipers (Fickett, Cruickshank), another at Beach Haven, N.J., on March 13 (C. K. Nichols).

Gulls.—White-winged gulls occurred in usual numbers and a black-headed gull (*ridibundus*) was frequently seen in New York Harbor.

Alcidae.—It may be that mortality among the alcids was unusually heavy this winter but the high death rate was probably correlated with an unusually heavy flight of these birds. Most of our records were of dead birds picked up on the beaches. The majority of these birds were heavily oiled. Two observers (Stone, Wells) reported that on 19 trips along the Long Island shore 111 dovekeys were seen, 102 of which were dead. The greatest number found on any one day was 32 on February 17; all were dead. The New Jersey beaches also produced a large number of dead alcids, the rarest being an Atlantic murre picked up on the beach near Point Pleasant in early February (Van Deusen). A few razor-billed auks and Brünnich's murre were also found dead.

Snowy owl.—The invasion of snowy owls last winter probably exceeded in the number of birds anything that has been heretofore recorded. The earliest records received came from inland points: Radburn, N.J., November 4; Bound Brook, N.J., November 7; Flatbrookville, N.J., November 9. As the season advanced the number increased, some very large counts coming from Long Island where they reached their maximum numbers in early December; but hunters were then taking a heavy toll and the numbers dropped sharply. The last report for the winter was of 2 owls at Jones Beach on March 20 (Wells).

Land birds.—Wintering tree swallows and Carolina wrens were reported from Long Island. Myrtle warblers were unusually abundant. A few northern

shrikes came down and were observed on Long Island, none from New Jersey.

Finches.—The winter flight of finches was remarkable, particularly that of the evening grosbeaks. They first appeared in New Jersey in early November, and by January they had increased to unprecedented numbers; at that time there were certainly several thousand in the area, and as late as April 15 large numbers were still being seen at feeding stations. All reports indicated that females outnumbered males at the feeding stations by a ratio of about 3 to 1. The natural food of these birds appeared to be exhausted soon after their arrival and for the remainder of the season they seemed to be supported almost entirely by feeding stations, which are now maintained in large numbers throughout this region. The presence of abundant food, although artificially supplied, may possibly at some time cause a permanent extension of range. Its exact effect on the survival of the birds last winter is difficult to assess now, but it possibly was considerable, and it may have retarded further dispersal of the birds to some more distant region.

Pine grosbeaks were reported in small and scattered flocks; some wintered at Bethel, Conn. (Bunting), and others at Kensico, N.Y. (Komorowski). Very few redpolls were recorded, only one or two birds at a time from Long Island and from Westchester County. A rather southerly record for these birds is a small flock in mid-January at Beach Haven, N.J. (Vail). The European goldfinch is about holding its own in western Long Island but shows no extension of range (Elliott).—CHARLES K. NICHOLS, *American Museum of Natural History, New York 24, N.Y.*

PHILADELPHIA REGION.—On the whole the winter season was rather mild. A cold snap during Christmas week, when the temperature dropped to 8°, was the most pronounced cold period experienced during the winter months.



Snowy owl.—The appearance of snowy owls and evening grosbeaks in the early fall was followed by the largest invasion of these two species that has apparently ever occurred in this area. Snowy owls were widely distributed throughout the region. Nine were reported shot in Lancaster County, Pa. (Louise F. A. Tanger in Lancaster County Bird Club Bulletin, Feb. 1946 issue), and as many more were killed in the immediate vicinity of Philadelphia. The snowy owl receives no protection in Pennsylvania. There were also several records from coastal and inland points of New Jersey. The last report to be received was from the north edge of Philadelphia in early March (Yoder).

Evening grosbeak.—Reports of evening grosbeaks came from many widespread localities—as far west in Pennsylvania as State College, south to Cape May in New Jersey, to Wilmington in Delaware, and to Baltimore in Maryland. Never have these birds been so abundant as in the winter of 1945-46. Flocks of 6-40 birds were frequent. The largest flock reported was of 100 or more at Brown's Mills, N.J. A report covering Cape May County, N.J., gives the following records: Ocean View, 6-45 birds almost daily, December 23 to February 19 (Fox); Cape May Court House, February 2 (Mrs. Gandy); Swanton, February 10 (A. Ludlam); Dennisville, February 5 (L. Evringham); South Seaville, February date not given (H. Collins, et al.).

Hawks.—The red-tailed hawk population of the marshes along the Delaware River was low last winter. On January 13 not a single red-tail was seen on a trip from Westville to Salem, N.J. Such an experience is rare indeed. Other trips averaged about 3 red-tails each.

Waterfowl.—The lower Delaware duck population was reported by Coman to be 40-50% lower than in 1944. Pintails showed the greatest decrease, followed by black ducks.

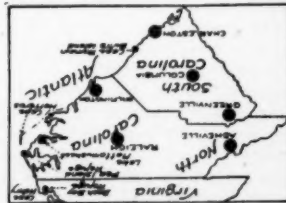
Flocks of brant occurred on almost all of the large salt bays and sounds along the coast of southern Jersey last winter. On Absecon Bay, where the greatest brant concentrations occur, from 25,000 to 30,000 were estimated on February 17.

Some 15,000 whistling swans were estimated to be present on the Susquehanna flats at Perryville, Md., on February 23.

In late February, some 20,000 snow geese occupied the marshes at Fortescue, N.J.

Other winter records.—State College, Pa., October 28, sanderling, and on November 11, blue goose, 12 (Clark); also at State College, November 11, oldsquaw (Cowell); Swarthmore, Pa., January 2, yellow-bellied sapsucker (Worth); Collingswood, N.J., February 25, yellow-bellied sapsucker, 2 (Potter); Marshalltown, N.J., February 17, European widgeon (Culver, et al.); West Chester, Pa., March 7, gadwall (several observers); Salem, N.J., December 1, snow goose, 3 (Coman); Fort Mott, N.J., hooded merganser, 5 (Coman); Paradise, N.J., on the Delaware, December 1, ruddy duck, 1500 (Coman).—J. K. POTTER, 437 Park Ave., Collingswood, N.J.

CAROLINA REGION.—COASTAL SECTION.—Temperatures were several degrees under normal in December, and above normal during the remainder of the period (particularly March.) Rainfall was slightly above normal for the first half of the period.



Populations.—Small birds appeared in their usual numbers,

with an increase especially noted in robins. Some good Wilson's snipe flights were reported, but doves were somewhat under normal. Ducks continued to decrease, accelerating the decline begun 2 years ago or earlier. Canada geese numbers appeared to be steady. At Santee-Cooper, S.C., the decrease in waterfowl was very evident by late December, and the same appeared to be true at Mattamuskeet, N.C. Much of Santee-Cooper's decline (particularly in baldpates and coots) may be attributable to loss of food plants caused by the September 1945 hurricane.

Migration.—Up to the end of March, movements seemed to be normal among departing winter and arriving spring birds, although the first chimney swifts passed through Charleston on March 19 (Seebeck), a day earlier than the previous known extreme date. Of interest are 3 pine skinks, February 17, at Santee, S.C. (John Yrizarry, Wesley Lanyon), as well as 16 marbled godwits and 4 long-billed curlews near Beaufort, S.C., March 9 (Y.).

Breeding.—A woodcock with 3 young not yet able to fly was recorded near Charleston, March 18 (Guerard). Eggs were reported for the Carolina wren, loggerhead shrike, and yellow-throated warbler by March 31 (Cutts).

Unusual.—A single whistling swan was seen at Santee-Cooper, December 7 (Peters), as compared with some 2 dozen along the South Carolina coast the preceding winter. At Santee-Cooper, there were 15 blue geese on December 26 (Baldwin), and at Romain 19 snow geese on February 21 (Peters). One (probably 3) European cormorant was observed near Norfolk, Va., December 31 (Mrs. A. C. Reed), another at Folly Beach, S.C., March 25 (Yrizarry), and a third at Charleston, March 27 (Peters). An odd-looking orchard oriole (specimen examined and identified by Dr. Alexander Wetmore) was found dead at Mt. Olive, N.C., December 19 (Bob Holmes III). Mrs. Reed found 2 purple sandpipers at Cape Charles, Va., December 31. A snowy owl was taken at Core Sound, N.C., December 14 (C. H. West), and another was observed at Charleston on January 24.

INTERIOR SECTION.—The winter period, like that of the previous year, was comparatively mild, with very little snow or sleet. Temperatures were somewhat above normal, the lowest recording being about 20° at Raleigh and Columbia.

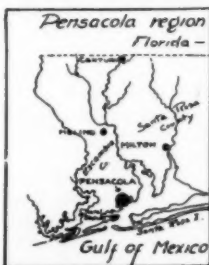
Finches.—The most interesting feature of the period was the appearance of evening grosbeaks at Salisbury (Miss Knox), High Point (Mattocks), and Henderson (Mrs. Bachman), the earliest date being January 24 at Salisbury, and the 2 latest on March 25 (large flock at same place) and April 9 at Henderson (1). They were also reported from Virginia at Charlottesville, Lexington, and Bristol (Grey). Purple finches occurred all winter throughout the section. Siskins were scarce, reported only from Henderson on November 4, and from Chapel Hill on the Christmas count.

Red-breasted nuthatches also appeared infrequently, only 1 was noted at Henderson on March 30, a

few at Spartanburg (Cannon), but more at Charlottesville, Va., than last winter (Grey). In mid-January, J. C. Crawford saw 6 birds digging through half a foot of snow on his farm near Statesville (Miss Anderson) to get at oats dropped from a drill; from a book illustration he determined them to be Smith's longspurs. Bob Holmes III saw a snow bunting in company with sparrows on January 4. Mrs. Bachman at Henderson had an orchard oriole come to her feeding board off and on from February 11 to April 6. Four swans were seen on a pond near Pineville, Mecklenburg County, N.C., during the holidays (Mrs. Clarkson). Several orange-crowned warblers were seen and 1 taken at Lyman near Spartanburg in December (Cannon). John Trott reported a decided decline in the English sparrow population at New London. At Columbia a large "starling" roost actually consisted predominantly of starlings, English sparrows, and cowbirds, with a few robins, red-wings, and rusties; the numbers ran into the thousands (Mrs. Charles). She also noted more birds than usual infested by ticks. An immature white-crowned sparrow was noted at the same place on January 24 and 28.

MOUNTAIN SECTION.—Near Asheville, Mrs. Grinnell noted the following: white-crowned sparrow, 2, March 25; redpoll, 1, December 29; red crossbill, 4, Elk Mountain, March 15; tree sparrow, 2 on December 29, and 4 on January 10.—E. B. CHAMBERLAIN, Charleston Museum, Charleston, S. C., and C. S. BRIMLEY, N.C. Dept. of Agriculture, Raleigh, N.C.

PENSACOLA (FLA.) REGION.—The first freezing spell to reach the coast came on November 24. The next 4 weeks were far below normal in tempera-



ture, with a low for the winter of 20° on December 20. January and February were slightly warmer than average, with the last freeze of the winter reported on January 23 (early). March was warm, and vegetation developed 2 weeks earlier than usual. Heavy rains in December were not sufficient to compensate for the preceding dry fall, and water levels remained low through January and February. Torrential rains in March (7 inches in 24 hours on March 26-27) overflowed upland ponds and caused serious floods in creeks and rivers.

The only indication now observable of the widespread damage done to bird life by the severe freeze of January 1940 is the continued rarity of Wilson's snipe and savannah sparrow. The snipe (once common) and the sparrow (once abundant) can yet be found only rarely even in their favored haunts.

The local scarcity of ducks, which includes all species except the lesser scaup and red-breasted merganser, may have little meaning in the broad na-

tional picture. Army and Navy aviation schools and bases in this area maintained an "umbrella" of airplanes over the whole region, even in this first peace-time winter, and the continuous disturbance undoubtedly had an adverse effect on wildlife.

Mrs. A. L. Whigham (Century, Fla.) reported a fox sparrow on December 19 (the only one seen in this region since 1919) and a pine siskin on March 22-24 (only the third in my 30-year local experience). Her feeding-station flock of purple finches, reported in much reduced numbers in recent winters, has regained its former status and comprised about 200 birds in January and February.

Other notable occurrences include: Florida gallinule, 1 on December 2 and 23; old-squaw, 1 on December 27, 1 on the 29th (Mrs. J. F. Wernicke), 2 on January 28 (Mrs. Wernicke), and 1 on March 24; man-o'-war bird, 1 on January 6; and red-breasted nuthatch, 1 on February 3. The gallinule, rare even in migration, had never before been reported in midwinter. One of the old-squaws of January 28 was an adult male, the only one ever recorded here, and the 5 birds of this winter exceeded the total of the preceding 30 years. The man-o'-war was the only one I have ever seen in January, although I have notes on occasional December occurrence.

Regular, but rare, winter residents include: Bewick's wren, 1 each on December 30, January 20, February 22 and 24, and March 10; black and white warbler, 1 on January 20, 2 on the 27th; tree swallow, flock of 200 (est.) all morning on the 20th.

Robins, extremely abundant all winter, probably attracted by a bumper crop of wild berries, started a noticeable withdrawal from this region early in March. By March 15, only a few remained.

A peculiar deviation of habit of the American golden-eye, normally a bird of the open salt water, was noted three times this winter—a single bird, always a female, was seen feeding actively in an upland, fresh-water pond (one of these was little more than a puddle) on December 30, January 19, and March 17. At such times, the birds are tame and permit a close approach of observers on foot.

Gannets are seen in small numbers every winter off the Gulf beaches of this region—this year on February 5, March 24, and April 14. With hardly an exception in many years of observation, they are seen flying steadily westward, seldom even pausing to dive. Where do these birds go? It is hardly likely that they turn northward and migrate overland, but there are no recent reports of occurrence west of this region that would indicate an extended circuit of the Gulf coast. Observers on the Mississippi and Louisiana coasts, take note!

White-eyed vireos probably winter regularly in small numbers, but they are so secretive that they are seldom noted before the latter half of February with the incidence of their song season. This year, singing birds were first heard on February 23 and 24, about a month before the usual arrival date of migrants from farther south.—FRANCIS M. WESTON, 2006 E. Jordan St., Pensacola, Fla.

OHIO-MICHIGAN REGION.—The coldest weather and the heaviest snowfall of the winter came in the two middle weeks of December, and most of the



half-hardy stragglers vanished at this time. The remainder of the winter was fairly mild and almost entirely free from snow over a greater part of this region.

The principal event of the cold months, the invasion of snowy owls, passed its peak in November. Not many were seen after December 15, although a few remained into March. An incomplete summary from the

State of Michigan shows 618 owls killed and 411 sight records not followed immediately by a report of a bird killed (Black). As these figures suggest, a great majority of snowy owls are shot soon after arrival in this region.

Another interesting event of the winter was the widespread movement of evening grosbeaks throughout southern Michigan and northern Ohio. Small flocks of these erratic visitors, although not common anywhere, were seen in a number of localities.

It becomes increasingly clear that the bob-white is on the verge of extinction in many northern Ohio and southern Michigan localities where it was common 5 years ago. For the first time in history, it was not seen during the Toledo Christmas Bird Count.

The black-backed and glaucous gulls probably should be listed as winter visitors here even though at the western end of Lake Erie, with the regularity of spring migrants, they are seen most frequently in early March when the ice breaks up. A search by canoe offshore on March 10 revealed 21 black-backs and 4 glaucous gulls along 10 miles of beach between Toledo and Bolles Harbor, Mich. (Stophlet, Mayfield).

Although we lack the statistical evidence which would permit a positive conclusion, it is our opinion, confirmed by other observers, that the small birds of woods and field were notably scarce this winter. Wintering ducks were below normal in numbers.

Rarities.—An Iceland gull was reported from Cleveland on February 24 (Hill, Brodie). This extremely rare bird was studied at length by observers who see the glaucous gull every winter and who had a chance to compare this individual with the herring gulls accompanying it. Its smaller body and bill were noted particularly.

A northern shrike, very rare in Ohio, was seen on December 27 near Toledo (Van Camp). It was eating a mouse when first seen and permitted approach near enough to detect the barring on the breast. After eating, it was unapproachable, which is the typical behavior of these northern visitors.

A mockingbird for 3 weeks in late December and early January was an exceptional event at Lansing, Mich., and a catbird at the same place was only slightly less remarkable (Ludwig). A mockingbird also remained for a time near Ashland in north-central Ohio (Kahl).

The unpredictable saw-whet owl was seen near Cleveland on December 10 (Sherwin, Skaggs). A pied-billed grebe near Toledo on January 25 (Van Camp) was unusual at this season.—HAROLD MAYFIELD, 2557 Portsmouth Ave., Toledo 12, Ohio.

MIDDLE-WESTERN REGION.—Snows of moderate depth, which came early in November at the time of the first severe cold wave, remained on the



ground to the end of the year. Thereafter, temperatures were moderate, with a deficiency in precipitation. March was unseasonably warm, resulting in an "early spring."

In general, land birds and waterfowl moved southward in mid-November with a definite scarcity of birds in December. The appearance in late January and February of many species that normally winter in moderate numbers suggests a partial northward movement of these hardier species as winter conditions moderated.

Wintering waterfowl were lacking in most parts of the region, although exceptions were reported where conditions were favorable. At Yankton, S.D., Larrabee reported a flock of mallards and Canada geese, estimated by others at 25,000 birds, that remained on an artificial pond near town. At McCook Lake, S.D., the spring flight of pintails had arrived on February 17 (Halliday), almost before the wintering mallards had moved north from Lake Andes, S.D. (Nelson). The latter refuge is maintained in part by an artesian well.

The concentration of mallards that normally remains on the Chautauqua Refuge into the winter moved south beginning November 22, and by December 12 only 15,000 remained, of which 2600 wintered. This small number was attributable to the difficult feeding conditions caused by ice and snow in the fields. The wintering mallards on Lake Springfield, Ill., also decreased and by February 10 black ducks were more abundant than the mallards (Bonney, Eifert).

There were several reports of stragglers. A single blue-winged teal was at Madison, Wis., January 1, and a hooded merganser was seen by Orianus at Milwaukee on December 27. Populations of old-

squaws on Lake Michigan fluctuated as the ice shifted. About 250 were in Waukegan Harbor on February 10 (Stevenson, DuMont), while 100 were off Jackson Park, Chicago, March 16 (Clark). Three old-squaws at Lake Springfield on February 17 and 22 were more unusual (Eifert).

An immature male king eider was studied in detail by T. J. Nork and Charles T. Clark in Belmont Harbor, Chicago, December 1. It was seen later by many observers during December.

A flock of 24 bald eagles was present below Keokuk Dam on December 3 (Musselman) where they normally winter. A pair of broad-winged hawks was studied for some time at Waterworks Park, Des Moines, February 9, by Ethel Badgley and Mrs. E. C. Gessell. Individuals or pairs of these birds have been noted irregularly in winter at Des Moines when they should be much farther south. Charles T. Clark identified a Harlan's hawk in the Morton Arboretum, near Chicago, January 13. The mottled tail, lacking any bars, was reported to have been well seen. The principal wintering locality for this species is believed to be Arkansas. A marsh hawk in Lincoln Park, Chicago, January 12 (Nork, Clark), was a straggler.

An adult glaucous gull was found in Jackson Park, Chicago, March 4, by L. K. Caldwell. This bird was seen by many C.O.S. members during the next 2 weeks. Two immature Iceland gulls were seen in the same locality by Mrs. Amy Baldwin and C. O. Decker, and were present for at least 10 days; they were reported on March 16 (Clark).

Fifty-two members of the Chicago Ornithological Society drove to Pulaski State Park, Ind., March 31, and saw at least 200 sandhill cranes. These birds, enroute from an undetermined wintering ground, visit the Kankakee River valley regularly each spring. A small flock of prairie chickens are resident in the park (Caldwell).

The usual wintering owls were found in the Morton Arboretum, the species including barn, long-eared, great horned, and short-eared. Saw-whet owls were reported only from the Chicago area. The earliest observation was of 1 at Montrose Beach, October 21 (Nork, Clark); another was in the Morton Arboretum from December 16 (Bartel) to February 24 (Clark).

The flight of snowy owls into the Middle-Western Region coincided with the invasion in Michigan, where 42 reports were received by the Michigan Conservation Department in October and 331 in November. However, the intensity of invasion appeared to have been much less west and southward. In Wisconsin, there were "numerous records from all parts of the state, beginning in October," while Iowa also had "several reports from various parts of the state." The snowy owl was unreported from the Yankton, S.D., area, central Iowa, and central Illinois. Observations in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois extended from early October on Horicon Marsh (Beed) to November 18 at the Indiana Dunes (C.O.S. field trip). There were no reports from December on.

Evening grosbeaks were reported from various parts of the region. A male, a female, and 2 immatures were seen by Mrs. Battell on November 4 at Ames, Iowa, and subsequently at various other places in the community. Eight birds were seen during the Christmas Bird Count on January 1 at Madison, Wis.; a pair was seen eating box elder seeds on December 26 (Eifert), and probably the same birds were seen on February 1 in Washington Park feeding on frozen haws (Bonney). Musselman reported 3 evening grosbeaks at Plainville, Ill., on February 3, and 5 at Quincy. This was the first occurrence since 1909 in the Quincy area.

A single pine grosbeak was reported on January 1 at Madison, Wis. Red-breasted nuthatches were reported from most parts of the region. Mrs. McMaster watched one of these birds carrying seeds from her feeding tray at Belvidere, Ill., which they pressed into the ground very much as the squirrels do; this bird was present from November 19 to March 25. Northern shrikes were reported on Christmas Bird Counts from 4 localities in southern Wisconsin and 1 bird wintered at Lincoln Park, Chicago (Nork, Clark).

Snow buntings were first seen at Montrose Beach, Chicago, on October 14 (Nork, Clark). Subsequently, 13 were seen at Blue Island, Ill., November 17, at the Indiana Dunes the next day (Bartel), and 24 at Kenosha on December 28. There were scattered reports of cedar waxwings, which may have been wintering birds or extremely early migrants in February. A small flock of 6 Bohemian waxwings was reported by Larrabee on February 2 at Yankton, S.D., and another flock of 27 at the same place on February 7; at Des Moines 2 were seen by Mary Ellen Warters feeding in a high-bush cranberry on March 2.

A single Harris's sparrow was seen at Des Moines on February 28 (Warters, Gessell). Numerous other reports of sparrows in February probably represented early spring migrants.

Horned larks were evidently scarce early in the winter because of the snow, but most observers reported the reappearance of these birds in February. Pine siskins were present in about the usual numbers, and red-headed woodpeckers were reported wintering at Madison and Seneca, Wis., and in central Illinois.

Robins, mourning doves, meadowlarks, grackles, and red-wings were scarce during December but were reported from all localities during late January and February.—PHILIP A. DUMONT, Evanston, and ELLEN THORNE SMITH, Lake Forest, Ill.

MISSOURI REGION.—Almost normal weather during the fall of 1945 was followed by severe cold and deep snow during most of December. Temperatures of -14° were recorded in parts of the state and the average for the month was 7.4° below normal. Temperatures for January and February were 3.4° and 7.0° above average and both months were deficient in precipitation.



The fall migration of ducks was rather erratic, best in western Missouri and poor in the Mississippi Valley. Mallards and pintails were rather common, diving ducks unusually scarce. Concentrations of waterfowl at favorable places were generally small, compared with other years. Blue, lesser snow, and Canada geese were somewhat more numerous than usual over the entire state. Of an estimated 35,000 Canada geese at Horseshoe Lake near Cairo, Ill., 5100 were killed during a 5-day open season totaling 22.5 hours. The closing of the lakes and marshes during the December cold spell practically cleared the state of waterfowl. The winter census, conducted the last week of January, showed only 19,900 mallards, 100 pintails, and 665 Canada geese, the lowest count since 1938.

Wintering predators, in general, were not plentiful. A few bald eagles were present along the Mississippi River and a golden eagle was reported caught in a trap at St. Joseph, December 1. Marsh hawks were fairly common, particularly in the river bottoms and prairie regions. Eastern red-tails were scattered over the area and Harlan's hawk was reported from western Missouri and eastern Kansas. There were few reports of the American rough-leg.

Contrary to expectations, based on the experience of other years, the severe weather of December did not result in decreased numbers of small land birds during the remainder of the winter. Regular winter residents, such as juncos and tree sparrows, and a number of species that may be quite uncommon or rare in winter were reported present in unusual numbers over much of the area, a situation that does not seem to be explained entirely by more observers in the field and improved transportation facilities. In the vicinity of St. Louis, J. E. Comfort reported numerous flocks of robins and bluebirds during January, and other species unusually common during the winter were killdeer, kingfisher, mourning dove, migrant shrike, meadowlark, bronzed grackle, cowbird, white-crowned and white-throated sparrows. Reports from the western part of the area, Springfield and the southeastern lowlands, are rather similar. Other species that seemed to be present in unusual numbers were the yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-breasted nuthatch, winter wren, and purple finch. In eastern Kansas, fox sparrows were reported to have wintered commonly, Harris's sparrow was rather uncommon, and flocks of Lapland longspurs noted between January 1 and February 14 (Miller, Boyd).

Specimens of off-color juncos taken near Kansas City on December 23 by Hedges and Brandt were identified by A. H. Miller of the University of California as *Junco h. cismontanus*, Cassiar junco, and *Junco o. montanus*, Montana junco.

Among the unusual observations for the season

were: red-shafted flicker near Kansas City during the fall (Hedges); old-squaw near Topeka, February 16 (Miller, Boyd); evening grosbeak at St. Louis, January 1 (Henry); and vermilion flycatcher at Pleasant Hill, Mo., October 27 (Shirling). This last sight record was made by a scientific bird student of long experience who noted every detail of the bird's plumage as it perched on a dead branch by a lake shore and repeatedly sallied forth after insects.—JAMES W. CUNNINGHAM, *Jefferson City, Mo.*

MINNESOTA REGION.—November was a normal month and presented no unusual weather conditions. Moderate weather prevailed until December



10 when the Minneapolis lakes froze and the temperature fell to 4° below zero at the Twin Cities and to 26° below at Bemidji for a two-day period. On December 14 the subzero weather returned for a 10-day stay to place on record the coldest December since the all-time record of 1927. During January there were 7 sub-zero days in Minneapolis, the coldest on January 25

and 26, when the temperatures were 16° and 20° below zero at Minneapolis and 34° below at International Falls. February commenced with temperatures of 8° and 16° below zero; the remainder of the month was more moderate with but occasional and brief abnormal weather. March ushered in spring temperatures, which quickly melted the remaining snow.

Winter birds.—Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Swedenborg contribute the following account of the winter season in the Minneapolis and Minnesota Valley region: "This has been an unusually interesting winter and birds are very numerous considering the cold and snow of December. On the 29th of December we took our usual census and found 25 species and am sure we missed a few others. On this date, besides the resident species, we saw the following species: 2 mallards, 2 American rough-legged hawks, marsh hawk, 2 Wilson's snipe, kingfisher, 2 brown creepers, eastern meadowlark, 77 red-winged blackbirds, 2 rusty blackbirds, 2 cowbirds, 2 purple finches, 7 goldfinches, 10 juncos, more than 200 tree sparrows, and 2 song sparrows. Since the first of the year we have also seen an immature red-tailed hawk, American rough-legged hawk, 2 grackles, and another meadowlark. We saw the ferruginous rough-legged hawk at Bloomington Ferry, November 11 and 15."

A ruddy duck remained on Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis until December 2, and on December 8 at least a hundred American mergansers, a few red-breasted and a hooded merganser, scaups, golden-eyes, ring-necks, mallards, a baldpate, a coot, and a pied-billed grebe were seen on Lake Calhoun (Swedenborg).

Snowy owl.—It is apparent from the number of recorded observations received at the museum that this season has seen a considerable influx of snowy owls from the North. The earliest date is for an individual seen at Palmer's Lake on November 20. Additional records are as follows: Minneapolis—November 25 (G. Rickart), November 28 (Mrs. Koffen); St. Paul—November 27 (Wm. Marshall), December 5 (Mrs. Marshall), December 28 (A. C. Rosenwinkel); St. Cloud—November 29, December 18 (H. M. Wilson), December 27; Duluth—December 24 (O. Lakela); Medicine Lake—November 23 (B. Cohen); Sebeka—an individual that remained throughout the winter was last observed on March 9 (C. O. Bjore).

Stray notes.—Rusty and Brewer's blackbirds, cowbirds, and one bronzed grackle were seen feeding with a flock of red-wings at Nicol on February 11. A mourning dove was noted at Nicol on January 2. A tufted titmouse spent the winter at Glen Lake (Mrs. Lupient). Flocks of Lapland longspurs were reported southwest of Minneapolis on March 3 (Swedenborg).

From Duluth.—A white-throated sparrow with an apparent wing injury wintered at a feeding station. A pine grosbeak was seen on March 4 and an evening grosbeak on March 6; both species were uncommon there this season (Mrs. W. Olin). Dr. Lakela reported that all small species of birds were scarce and that no crossbills or pine siskins were seen.

From Anoka.—A flock of evening grosbeaks was observed for several days in succession during the first week of February (Ellis).

Early migrants.—The exceedingly warm weather of early March brought a considerable number of early migrants. Horned larks were abundant between Minneapolis and Red Wing on March 2 (Rysgaard). Western meadowlarks appeared southwest of Minneapolis on March 3 (Swedenborg). Bluebirds were observed in Minneapolis on March 3 (D. Jacobs); 6 were seen in Minneapolis on March 7 (Lupient).—GEORGE N. RYSGAARD, *Minnesota Museum of Natural History, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minn.*

TEXAS COASTAL REGION.—There was no serious cold weather in the region during the winter. The lowest temperature reached in Houston was



about 30°, and even such subfreezing weather was recorded only two or three times. Most of December was rainy, with more cold days than usual. January was milder and drier than December.

The season's last freeze (31°) came on January 22. The first week of February was cold and inclement; but afterward spring came on quickly, with bright and balmy weather.

General conditions.—1. In spite of the mild winter, several more typically northern species invaded the region in unprecedented numbers. Robins inundated the countryside, and were the talk of the town. (The ratio of northern to southern robins was about 4 to 1.) Goldfinches were likewise phenomenally abundant. More purple finches could be seen in one day about Houston than anybody had seen in the entire 15 years preceding. Slate-colored juncos were almost common in some of the river bottoms.

2. On the other hand, an abnormally large number of species that usually winter south of the region and are almost unknown in winter here were observed this season. These included: a whip-poor-will and a catbird at Sheldon on December 30; a catbird a few miles north of Houston on February 3; a flock of white-faced glossy ibis at Cove from December 26 to January 10; 2 flocks of white ibis at Cove on January 12; a roseate spoonbill at Cove on December 30; scissor-tailed and crested flycatchers at Cove on December 9; a yellow-breasted chat at Cove on December 9 and 22; a ruby-throated hummingbird at Houston on February 20.

3. There was also a remarkable influx of species that ordinarily winter far west of the coastal region. The eared grebe was reported at Cove on December 23, and at Rockport on March 5; a California gull was unmistakably identified by Lieutenant Commander Fred M. Packard at Corpus Christi on October 21 and March 17; Say's phoebe was reported at Brownsville by Dr. Dillon Ripley on March 9, and at Corpus Christi on March 16 (Packard); red-eyed cowbirds were common, but not numerous, at Corpus Christi and at Rockport from February 1; a Montana junco was closely observed several times by Mrs. Hagar at Rockport on March 10.

4. With a few exceptions, the numbers of individuals among the wintering species were about normal. Louisiana herons and reddish egrets were less numerous. There were strong indications of a decrease in the numbers of most ducks, especially the canvas-back. Wilson's snipe were alarmingly scarce. Red-tailed hawks were reduced to less than one-half the normal numbers. Fewer laughing gulls and more ring-billed gulls than usual wintered in the region. Coots were as numerous as ever; starlings were more numerous than last year. Sandhill cranes made an excellent showing, as did practically all the perching species, except the hermit thrush.

Territories.—At least some of the many robins that invaded the region in early January took up and defended territories for about 2 months. For example, one robin appropriated a tree in the writer's yard, remained in it almost constantly, and chased off intruders. Only a mockingbird living in a neighboring shrub put up a successful fight against the robin, and chased instead of being chased. Is it possible that the continual harrying of the robins by the mockingbirds is one reason why robins do not breed in any numbers in this region? Another robin settled himself in the back yard of

C. E. Buehner of Houston, and drove other birds from the feeding trays. Mr. Buehner trapped the robin, banded it, and liberated it 2½ miles from his home; it was back in his yard the next day. He trapped it again, and took it 13 miles away; 2 days later it was back in his yard. All this is especially interesting in view of the fact that, for many years, no robins at all wintered in the localities where these robins wintered this year.

On January 28, 1945, Mr. Buehner banded 6 or 7 of a flock of pine warblers in his yard. The birds then disappeared; they do not breed in the region. But on January 27, 1946, he retrapped 4 or 5 of the banded birds in his yard. It was an amazing example of flock consistency as well as of temporal and geographical regularity.

A male vermilion flycatcher, a species that seems to move irregularly northward in winter, occupied a very limited territory at Cove from early December to late February.

In summary, this was a normal season marked by many individual oddities of occurrence, most of which cannot be readily explained.—GEORGE G. WILLIAMS, *The Rice Institute, Houston, Texas.*

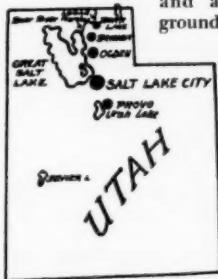
UTAH REGION.—Except for a mild spell around the holidays, the winter period was dry and cold. Bare ground on the sunny slopes of the mountains and almost continuous open ground in the valleys throughout the period made a very favorable winter for most land birds.

Waterfowl.—John B. Van den Akker, Bear River refuge manager, summed up conditions affecting the waterfowl there as follows: "The units were generally frozen over by December 9th and the river and channels by the 14th. Moderation toward the end of December gave way to a cold period during which everything was frozen until about February 24th."

The severity of the temperature was further reflected in his report of the pitiful remnant of the waterfowl hordes normally found in that area. Twenty pied-billed grebes, 10 great blue herons, 1 bittern, 15 whistling swans, 150 Canada geese, 150 mallards, 4 baldpates, 10 pintails, 6 American golden-eyes, and 10 coots had managed to eke out an existence around the overflows at the dike gates.

At the Ogden Bay refuge the current of the Weber River doubtlessly made more favorable conditions, for Jessup B. Lowe of the Utah Cooperative Wildlife Unit reported between 75 and 100 whistling swans wintering there and a few other waterfowl.

Contiguous to the marshes northwest of Salt Lake City that are fed by spring runs and the Jordan River, a much larger waterfowl population was able to pass the winter.



On January 6, Walter Palmer, Gordon Taylor, Bert Webb, and C. W. Lockerbie made counts and estimates that put the duck population of the area around Farmington Bay and the New State Gun Club at over 6000 individuals, most of which were pintails. Mallards were the only other species found in large numbers.

Hawks.—Most species common to the region were regularly observed but always in small numbers. Mr. Van den Akker furnished the most interesting report of the wintering hawks at Bear River refuge: 1-12 golden eagles, 1-4 bald eagles, 10 American rough-legs, 12 marsh hawks, and 2 duck hawks. Five other species were listed on the Christmas Bird Count but in small numbers.

Marsh and shore birds showed low counts on the Christmas count; subsequent reports were meager.

Gulls.—Ring-billed gulls showed a decided increase last winter. My own counts of 100-300 on several occasions and at different points and William Bader's Christmas count of over 1000 confirm it. A new and larger hog-feeding establishment west of town probably accounts for this increase.

Woodpeckers.—A high of 228 flickers was counted on the Christmas Bird Count. Lewis's woodpeckers wintered in good numbers, especially around the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. Downys were few in number, and hairys almost out of the picture.

Crows.—The bulk of the wintering crows in Utah County seemed to shift from the northern to the southern end of Utah Lake. L. D. Pfouts of Payson stated that the wintering population was estimated at 2000, while Woffinden reported them only in the hundreds from the northern end. Dr. Lowe noted two smaller concentrations in northern Utah—one of 250-300 birds at Lewiston, Cache County, and another of 300-400 near Tremonton, Box Elder County.

Waxwings.—The cedar waxwing was present all winter in small numbers. Bohemians were first reported on December 23 by A. M. Woodbury; after that date they increased rapidly. Earl Heusser and Gordon Taylor saw flocks almost daily of from 100 to 250, and on one occasion over 1000. Observations by Webb and Lockerbie substantiated their abundance.

The numbers of European starlings were noted last winter in 3 figures for the first time in Utah. On January 20 I counted over 200 near Decker's Lake and a larger concentration was reported from the rubbish dump west of Brigham City by Horton Jensen of the Utah Fish and Wildlife Service.

Brewer's blackbirds showed an increase, but redwings were way down in numbers last winter. House finches increased; other finches and sparrows declined, except for the song sparrow. This is due in part to farming and pasturing encroachments on their winter feeding areas.—C. W. LOCKERBIE, 223 West 9th South St., Salt Lake City 4, Utah.

SAN FRANCISCO REGION.—Dryness and cold characterized the months of January and February, but there was more sunshine in January. The first



growing weather came in late February. March was mainly cold and cloudy with light rains around the middle and the end of the month. The vegetation, which had started to grow so vigorously with the early fall rains, remained almost dormant through the spring. Trees that we expect to see in flower and leaf by March were still nearly bare in mid-April. Sleet and snow

in the mountains late in the spring damaged the trees and lesser plants. This retarded spring affected the birds directly through the cold and indirectly through the meager plant growth and reduced food supplies. This was especially noticeable at the higher altitudes, for the conditions were less severe on the low ground and there was less interference with the normal programs of birds.

In early January at Alameda Mrs. Kelly observed shorebirds in good variety and in many numbers. She had found ducks in San Leandro Bay and in other localities less numerous than in other years. Some notable water bird records: white pelican, Dumbarton Bridge, present as late as November 21 (Kelly); whistling swan, Los Banos, about 1500 on December 19 (K.); black brant, Carmel Bay, 6 on January 11 (Williams); emperor goose, Carmel Bay, first noted on December 28 by Wilma Cook, then seen on December 29 and 30 and January 8 and 11 (Williams); lesser snow goose, Lake Merritt, adult and 2 young on November 24 (K.); cinnamon teal, near Marsh Creek, 3 on March 28 (Johnston); bufflehead, Pardee Dam, November 18 (J.); hooded merganser, Pardee Dam, November 18 (J.); semipalmated plover, Bay Farm Island, present for third winter (K.); Wilson's snipe, San Joaquin River, near Stockton, 15 on December 9, near Marsh Creek, 3 on March 28 (J.), Hastings Reservation, January 23 and 30 and February 2 (Tevis); Caspian tern, Carmel Bay, 1 on December 9 (W.).

First indications were that spring arrivals would be early, but the late spring brought few individuals and these at much later dates than normal. Some birds appeared near the expected time, and then remained quiet or moved until warmer days came. Turkey vulture, Carmel Valley, near Roach Canyon, 1 on March 1 (Williams), Hastings Reservation, March 4 (Tevis), Corral Hollow, 2 on March 10 (Johnston); poor-will, Hastings Reservation, February 16 and 17 (T.); white-throated swift, Corral Hollow, 6 on March 16 (J.); Allen's hummingbird, Monterey, February 26 (W.); western kingbird, Corral Hollow, 4 on March 16 (J.); western flycatcher, Hastings Reservation, March 30 (Riney); violet-green swallow, Del Monte, 4 on February 26 (W.); Hastings Reservation, February 26 (R.); rough-winged swallow, Dillon Beach, March 27 (Weston); barn swallow, Stockton, March 22 (J.). Richmond

ferry slip, March 27 (Weston), near Ross, March 30 (Kelly); cliff swallow, Corral Hollow, 25 on March 16, near Stockton, 20 on March 25 (J.), University Campus, Berkeley, March 25 (Weston); warbling vireo, Ross, March 27 and 30 (K.); Hastings Reservation, April 1 (L.); orange-crowned warbler, Stockton, February 24 (J.), Berkeley, February 28 (Miller); pileolated warbler, Ross, March 27 (K.); Bullock's oriole, Hastings Reservation, March 27 (L.); black-headed grosbeak, Hastings Reservation, April 5 (Linsdale).

Reports of nesting were few. This activity, too, showed promise of an early start and then was stopped or slowed conspicuously by the cold and other unfavorable conditions. Early examples were all from locations close to the shore, as follows: bush-tit, Strawberry Canyon, Berkeley, 3 pairs nest-building within half a mile, February 26 (Kelly); red-breasted nuthatch, Golden Gate Park, excavating nest cavity on February 13 (K.); Brewer's blackbird, Carmel, first definite sign of pairing on January 28 by a color-banded pair mated in 1944 and 1945 (W.).

A few species deserve special mention because of their uncertain status or because they appeared this year in special numbers: white-tailed kite, on islands in delta near Stockton, 11 on December 11, Moss Landing, 1 on December 17 (Kelly), mouth of Calaveras River, Stockton, 1 on February 24 (Johnston); burrowing owl, 6 miles from Stockton, 6 on March 22 (J.); saw-whet owl, Carmel Highlands, January 31 and February 9 (Williams); yellow-shafted flicker, Golden Gate Park, February 9 and 13 (K.); Lewis's woodpecker, Hastings Reservation, January 19 (Tevis); robin, Stockton and surrounding country, numerous in January and February (J.), East Oakland, abundant (Seibert); varied thrush, numerous (K.); Townsend's warbler, scarce, only 1 seen (K.); white-throated sparrow, Hastings Reservation, 1 first seen on January 2 was still present in the same area on April 14; fox sparrow, more numerous than in most years (K.).—JEAN M. LINSDALE, *Hastings Reservation, Jamesburg Route, Monterey, Calif.*

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION.—The early winter was exceedingly mild and dry, broken only by a 3-day rain on December 20-22 which started

the green growth of herbs. Frosty nights and sunny days followed through February; real rains fell only in March, but the season's precipitation was still below normal. Snow in the mountains was lacking or transitory below 8000 feet through February, enabling some species to stay well within their



ordinarily deserted breeding range: December 30, green-tailed towhee and Cassin's finch, Big Bear

Lake (Berry), and house wren at 5100 feet in Santa Ana Canyon (Dawson, Cogswell).

Arrival of the commoner winter visitants, at least the first stragglers, was normal: shorebirds, Heermann's gull, and large-billed sparrow by August 1; mountain chickadee (to foothill cities, where now a regular w.v.) and ruby-crowned kinglet in mid-September; Gambel's sparrow in late September; and robin, hermit thrush, waxwing, Audubon's warbler, and chipping sparrow in October.

Loons and grebes.—Very few were reported along the coast, except for 10 red-throated loons, January 8-12, and 300 western grebes in January, to 1000 on March 10 at Santa Monica.

Geese.—Black brant at Point Mugu were noted in the fewest numbers in 7 years with maximum of 174 on March 10 (Stultz); 1000 (est.) at Mission Bay, San Diego, January 6, is also far below numbers in previous years there. Other wintering geese were nearly absent: 5 snows, December 3-January 14, Carlsbad (Morgan); 7 Canadas, December 29, Big Bear Lake (C.); and 34, January 2, near Oceanside (M.). 2 of which, shot later by hunters, weighed 12 lbs. each.

Ducks.—Ducks were late and at their lowest ebb in years. Even the best areas (which, along the coast, are usually the diked ponds of gun clubs) held only hundreds in January instead of the usual thousands. In Imperial Valley numbers were far below the high of 1943-44, but hunters still had little trouble getting full bags. Pintails, as usual, were commonest in fall, with shovellers surpassing them later; e.g., 400 shovellers at Carlsbad in January built up to 2000+ on March 3, while there were less than 100 pintails. Baldpates were very scarce in the Los Angeles area, 200-400 in San Diego County (Carlsbad and Mission Bay). Only 60 canvasbacks of the normal wintering 2000 were at Big Bear Lake, December 30; but in the coastal regions they increased in January from 50 (at Carlsbad) on December 2 to 200 on the 6th, and 250 on the 13th (M.). These and 150 "cans" on Palmdale Reservoir, February 17, were indicative of very late arrivals, but near-normal numbers. A female hooded merganser appeared in October for a fourth winter at Lincoln Park, Los Angeles, accompanied by a male in full plumage; both were still there into March. A male wood duck, also uncommon here, stayed on ponds along the Los Angeles River during most of November and December (Daugherty, Stultz), and a male was shot by a hunter near Oceanside in late January (M.).

Gulls.—This group was above normal in numbers, ring-bills especially so inland to the San Fernando Valley (Ware) and El Monte areas. Short-billed gulls hit an all-time high with 12-35 at Santa Monica, November 1-March 1 (S.).

Shorebirds.—After migrants had passed, wintering flocks locally were far below normal. Black-bellied plover were very scarce (maximum of 20-35 per day's birding); willet and marbled godwit appeared in flocks of hundreds rather than thousands. There were especially few sanderlings at Redondo (Shuart),

but 1000 in 2 miles of beach at Playa del Rey, January 27, was about normal. A maximum of 50 red-backed sandpipers appeared on January 13, Sunset-Bolsa Bays (C.). The contrast between numbers of "peeps" here and the huge concentrations (100,000+) in the San Francisco Bay region was very evident to the writer returning home in December. Avocets were much above normal in numbers, at Balboa even exceeding the godwits (Smith). Year by year the increasing marine growth on the jetties at Ballona Creek mouth attract more birds of the rocky shore. Three surf-birds there on August 28 (Kent) were later augmented to 12, which wintered together with 3-8 ruddy turnstones and 10-30 black turnstones; 1 surf-bird still remained on April 11 (Stultz). A rainy day's birding on February 3 produced a flock of 69 mountain plover near Point Mugu (K., S., M.).

Hawks.—Five white-tailed kites were reported near Mugu (S.), 2 at Bolsa Chica (Smith), several near El Toro marine base (Leroy Wilson), and, at Camp Pendleton, a hitherto unheard of concentration at a roost (?) with maximum on January 23 of 25 birds just at dawn, which dispersed later to feeding grounds (Lt. A. H. Morgan). A prairie falcon was back at the same pasture near Pasadena for the fourth successive winter. Several records of pigeon hawks included 2 very dark birds (supposedly *F. c. suckleyi*) at Puddingstone Dam, February 25 (Comby).

Among land birds the aberrantly mild weather might have accounted for the scarcity of certain winter visitors, but not the unusual abundance of others. Gambel's sparrows, Oregon juncos, chipping sparrows, Audubon's warblers, band-tailed pigeons, and mourning doves were definitely below average, although in certain of the best habitats they were still common. Robins, mountain bluebirds, hermit thrushes, cedar waxwings, and Lawrence's goldfinches were exceptionally numerous.

Robins were reported abundant by all observers from mid-December into March. Large flocks were everywhere (seen on all 22 field trips—Stultz), often mixed with waxwings, and were seen wherever there was any food in the way of berries. Toyon bushes in the foothills and wild grapes in the San Gabriel River Sanctuary were stripped by mid-January and robins became so common (in flocks of 100+) on city lawns that many inquiries were received from people who normally never see them in their regular winter tree-top and berry-bush habitat. The invasion was widespread from Santa Barbara through the Los Angeles area and inland to Banning, with smaller numbers in northern San Diego County

and below sea level in Imperial Valley (on freshly cut alfalfa fields, April 6-7).

Mountain bluebirds invaded every extensive open field of the coastal lowlands (where usually a rare and local w.v.) from November 1 to March. A maximum of 1000 was attained, January 8, in one field near Camarillo (S.); there were flocks of 100+ in the San Fernando Valley, Pasadena, San Gabriel River Sanctuary, Chino Valley, Lake Elsinore, San Luis Rey Valley, and San Marcos area in San Diego County; and 50 on February 10, to 4 on March 25 at Banning (Wilson). They were also abundant all through the great central valley of California, December 13-14, and in the Antelope Valley section of the Mojave Desert, February 17 (C.).

Hermit thrushes were commoner than in many seasons. Mr. Allen of Altadena banded 25 (1 return) last winter in his yard, where he had previously banded only 39 in 20 years! At Banning, Miss Wilson found up to 6 per field trip where 1 per winter was considered good before. Even at Santa Monica and Redondo Beach they were "everywhere," and 1 stayed on Balboa Island in outer Newport Bay from January 15 to March 1 (Smith).

Other land-bird records of interest, mostly because of locality: Lewis's woodpecker, 8 at Big Bear Lake, December 29-30 (C., Comby), 2 at Irvine Lake, January 19 (Whiting), and 1 in Pasadena, January 13 into April (Quattlebaum); gray flycatcher, December 9 (M.) and February 10 (C.), San Gabriel River Sanctuary—the first recorded there recently, although collectors secured them 40 years ago; sage thrasher, 1 on December 24-25, Banning (W.), 1 on February 17, Antelope Valley (C.), 8 on February 27, Whitewater (Comby), 1 on April 6, Coachella Valley (S., M.); the only wintering phainopepla, a male, February 23, near Shandon, northeastern San Luis Obispo County (Rett); slate-colored juncos commoner than ever before.

Rarities.—A white-throated sparrow, January 1 into April, Plummer Park, was seen by many observers at window-shelf range. Two American rough-legged hawks were found on February 24 at Newport Bay in the same area where seen 8 years ago (Comby); also seen by the Kents, Stultzes, and others until mid-March. At Santa Monica beach, March 10-25 (at least) there was a gull that, after much discussion and study of all available descriptions and museum skins, the many observers (C., S., K., M., et al.) agree was a first winter laughing gull—a first record for the west coast, although there is a small breeding colony at Salton Sea, 175 miles away.—HOWARD L. COGSWELL, 3807 Sierra Grande St., Pasadena 8, Calif.

MAKE YOUR PLANS NOW FOR THE 47th Christmas Count

Dates: December 21 through December 29